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**National Preparedness Month Observed for Thirteenth Year;
New Community Coalition Focuses on Safeguarding Children**

BREWSTER, NY —“Don’t wait, communicate, make your emergency plan today” is the returning theme of National Preparedness Month which kicks off September 1. This year in Putnam County, the 13th annual observance is getting added attention with the growing efforts of the Community Resilience Coalition (CRC). Agencies from the public, private and non-profit sectors make up the CRC, which focuses on ensuring the safety and well-being of children before, during and after disasters.

“We are fortunate in Putnam County to have first responders and highway departments that take the safety and well-being of all our residents, young and old, very seriously,” said County Executive MaryEllen Odell. “Children are among the most vulnerable of our community. Anything and everything that we can do to ensure their safety and resilience in times of crisis, we must do. That’s why the work of the CRC and the recognition of National Preparedness Month are so important.”

Research has shown that since children depend on multiple residents and local services, they can be viewed as an indicator of how well a community is recovering following a disaster. This is the reason behind the CRC, part of the Resilient Children/Resilient Communities Initiative, a research project at Columbia University’s National Center for Disaster Preparedness. The project is funded through a \$2 million grant from GlaxoSmithKline in partnership with Save the Children. Putnam County is one of two sites in the U.S. selected to create a blueprint to keep children safe in emergencies by increasing awareness and strengthening the community. The other site is Washington County in Arkansas.

“This is a unique opportunity for Putnam to strengthen our local network which will serve as a foundation to protect and support our young,” said Michael Nesheiwat, MD, Interim Commissioner of Health. “These dedicated organizations will be building a stronger, sustainable future, but there are also things—practical things—you can do right now to help in the effort in a very personal way.”

For example, most people view emergency preparedness as a huge job, but taking one, first step can make a big difference. Creating an ICE (in case of emergency) card, having emergency supplies on hand, and making a plan to meet or reconnect are some of the easy steps a family can take. Two of the best resources for taking that first step are at www.savethechildren.org/getready and www.ready.gov.

“Getting accurate information during an event is also key,” explains Anthony Sutton, Commissioner of the Bureau of Emergency Services (BES), “and NY Alert is a good way to start.” This free service from New York State sends both local and state emergency messages. Individuals who sign up can get real-time information about current threats sent to their cell phones. People pick what types of information they want and how they get it, either by email or text. They can change or cancel the alerts at any time. Personal information is completely protected and never shared. Sign up at www.nyalert.gov.

“Residents who wish to help with a community-wide response to emergencies, should consider joining the Medical Reserve Corps,” says Dr. Nesheiwat. “Putnam’s MRC still needs all types of volunteers, both non-medical and medical. For example, help is always needed with important logistical support or administrative tasks.” Interested residents can find out more information by visiting the Putnam County website or calling the health department at 845-808-1390.

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The mission of the **PUTNAM COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH (PCDOH)** is to improve and protect the health of the Putnam County community, composed of nearly 100,000 residents. Core services include community health assessment, disease surveillance and control, emergency preparedness, environmental health protection, family health promotion and health education. For more information, please visit the PCDOH website at www.putnamcountyny.com/health or visit the social media sites on Facebook at www.facebook.com/putnamhealth and Twitter [@PutnamHealthNY](https://twitter.com/PutnamHealthNY).

The **COMMUNITY RESILIENCE COALITION (CRC)** is a community-based partnership of public, private and not-for-profit stakeholder groups working together to assess and strengthen community resilience to support the protection, and recovery of children in the event of an emergency. It is part of the Resilient Children, Resilient Communities initiative, led by the National Center for Disaster Preparedness (NCDP) at Columbia University and Save the Children with funding by a grant from GlaxoSmithKline.

The **BUREAU OF EMERGENCY SERVICES OF PUTNAM COUNTY** keeps county residents safe from harm, by providing services to all fire, EMS and related emergency management initiatives. This includes training and equipping special teams for fire investigation, fire police response and hazardous materials mitigation, and a credible assessment team (CAT). Additionally the BES maintains a countywide communications system and continually seeks ways to improve response to both natural and manmade disasters. For more information, please visit the Bureau of Emergency Services website at <http://www.putnamcountyny.com/pcbcs/>

The **PUTNAM COUNTY MEDICAL RESERVE CORPS (MRC)** recruits and trains volunteers to support and strengthen the county’s existing response system. Its mission is to engage volunteers to strengthen public health, emergency response and community resiliency. Local community-based MRCs mobilize volunteers who donate their time and expertise, not only to prepare for and respond to emergencies, but also to promote healthy living throughout the year. For further information, please visit the MRC at <http://www.putnamcountyny.com/health/mrc/>

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